



ALERT

NUMBER 96

September /October 2011

***ALERT**, a publication of the Information Resource Center at the American Center for Educational Exchange, offers abstracts of current articles or reports in major areas of U.S. domestic or international affairs. Full-text articles are available to you upon request or following links at the end of the articles. **ALERT** is also posted on the IRC webpage of the Beijing Embassy website at http://beijing.usembassy-china.org.cn/irc_services.html.*

To request articles, please contact Ms. Gu Hong or Ms. Wang Wei by telephone, fax, mail or e-mail guhx@state.gov, or ircacee@state.gov. To request by mail, please circle the articles you wish to receive, include your name, address, and telephone number and return this list to us.

***DISCLAIMER:** articles and links to non-U.S. government Internet sites should not be construed as an endorsement of the views contained therein.*

**Information Resource Center (IRC)
American Center for Educational Exchange
Jingguang Center, Suite 2801
Hujialou, Chaoyang Qu
Beijing, 100020
Tel: 86-10-6597-3242, Ext.5212 or 5207
Fax: 86-10-6597-3006**

<http://beijing.usembassy-china.org.cn/irc.html>

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Economics and Tradep.3

1. Back To The Future
2. Choking The Oil Sands
3. An Exorbitant Burden

International Securityp.4

4. All Over The Map
5. The All-American
6. Does Obama Have A Grand Strategy? Why We Need Doctrines In Uncertain Times
7. The New Asianism
8. The South China Sea Is The Future Of Conflict

Democracy and Global Issuesp.5

9. Designing The Green Climate Fund
10. How Google Dominates Us
11. The Rebirth Of Russian Civil Society

U.S. Society And Valuesp.7

12. The 'Dramatic Picture' Of Richard Feynman
13. How To Land Your Kid In Therapy
14. Samuel Morse's Reversal Of Fortune
15. The Visions Of Ann Beattie

Economics and Trade

1. BACK TO THE FUTURE: A ROADMAP FOR TOMORROW'S CITIES

Kunstler, James Howard
Orion, July-August 2011

The heyday of suburbia and skyscraper-studded cities as we know them is palpably waning, writes Kunstler. The decreasing availability of fossil fuels and impinging climate change ensure the end of energy-intensive city structures, cheap air and motor transport and high-tech farming. According to Kunstler, the future will be smaller-scale neighborhoods and walkable towns clustered around local food and water resources; lucky ones will be linked by railways. Development without any limitation and a belief in “technomagic” have ironically created “places with no magic, no power to enchant the human spirit,” and despite “technograndiose” ideas about the future, our trajectory, by necessity, is likely a return to a human-sized, textured, localized lifestyle. Currently available online at <http://www.orionmagazine.org/index.php/articles/article/6336/>

2. CHOKING THE OIL SANDS

Sorensen, Chris; Savage, Luiza
MacLeans, posted August 25, 2011

Large numbers of climate activists have converged on Washington, D.C. to draw the American public's attention to the Alberta tar sands, one of the most energy-intensive and environmentally damaging sources of oil in the world. But the protests are not directed at the open-pit mines in Canada, but are an effort to block a proposed pipeline, Keystone XL, that will bring the crude from Canada to refineries in Texas and Louisiana. Because the pipeline crosses an international boundary, the U.S.-Canada border, the State Department must make a national-interest finding, and grant approval for its construction; a decision is expected by the end of the year. Industry proponents of Keystone XL point to the potential benefits of increased energy security and jobs, but many critics note that the U.S. is already amply supplied with Canadian crude, and the real reason TransCanada, the pipeline company, wants it built is to gain access to deepwater ports in the Gulf of Mexico, and thus to global oil markets, where they can get a higher price. Much local opposition has sprung up in mid-Western states regarding the pipeline's path across the Ogallala Aquifer, which supplies irrigation and drinking water to millions. Additionally, critics note that much of the crude that will be transported in the pipeline will not be oil but diluted bitumen (dilbit), an unstable mixture of viscous tar and naphtha solvents that has a history of pipeline ruptures. Currently available online at <http://www2.macleans.ca/2011/08/25/choking-the-oil-sands/>

3. AN EXORBITANT BURDEN

Pettis, Michael
Foreign Policy, posted September 7, 2011

Michael Pettis, professor of finance at Peking University and senior associate at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, argues that keeping the U.S. dollar as the world's reserve currency imposes significant costs on the U.S. economy. He rejects as false a popular perception that, thanks to its currency's status, the U.S. enjoys low interest rates and ability to borrow and consume beyond its means. Instead, foreign accumulation of U.S. dollar assets causes the huge U.S. trade deficit, the low level of savings and high levels of private and public debt or makes these three conditions worse, Pettis says. But Washington is reluctant to create rules that would prevent countries from accumulating U.S. dollars for fear that such rules would signal a relative

decline in the power of the U.S. economy. Calls for making an IMF basket of currencies – known as the Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) – the new global reserve currency are insincere at best, for no country is willing to accumulate SDRs, because of trade constraints. By moving in that direction, a country would be forcing trade deficits (and related currency appreciation) onto the countries whose currencies are included in the SDR, the author concludes. Currently available online at http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2011/09/07/an_exorbitant_burden

International Security

4. ALL OVER THE MAP: THE STRANGE NEW WORLD OF REPUBLICAN FOREIGN POLICY

Lake, Eli

New Republic, August 18, 2011, pp. 13-17

The author notes that the foreign-policy consensus within the U.S. Republican Party (GOP) has collapsed. The GOP foreign-policy establishment, traditionally composed of realists, came under attack by the neoconservatives in the 1970s, culminating in the election of the George W. Bush administration, from which many realists, such as Colin Powell and Brent Scowcroft, began distancing themselves. The neoconservatives dominated the party through the 2008 presidential elections, and the candidates then mostly reflected the unilateralist, democracy- and nation-building outlook of the Bush administration. In the last few years, however, new insurgents have emerged in the party, who are less inclined to support democratization and nation-building, and whose international outlook ranges from hawkishness to isolationism. The author writes that the GOP foreign-policy discussion “has imploded entirely, [resulting in a] difficult-to-parse ideological brew of policy disagreements and competing instincts.” Complicating the matter is that most of the candidates are only just beginning to form foreign-policy teams.

5. THE ALL-AMERICAN

Traub, James

New York Times Magazine, July 17, 2011

The author notes that after Barack Obama won the U.S. presidency in 2008, John Kerry, then the junior senator from Massachusetts, very much wanted to be named secretary of state, a job for which he felt qualified as a senior member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. However, Obama picked New York senator and former First Lady Hillary Clinton instead. In 2009, Kerry has been able to practice his own brand of diplomacy as chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee; he has become a kind of ex-officio member of Obama's national security team, which has dispatched him to conflict zones such as Afghanistan, Pakistan and Sudan. Kerry's willingness to travel anywhere he is needed, and stay as long as necessary, has won him Obama's gratitude. Currently available online at <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/07/17/magazine/john-kerry-our-man-in-kabul.html?pagewanted=all>

6. DOES OBAMA HAVE A GRAND STRATEGY? WHY WE NEED DOCTRINES IN UNCERTAIN TIMES

Drezner, Daniel

Foreign Affairs, Vol. 90, no. 4, July/August 2011, pp. 57-68

Drezner, Professor of International Politics at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University, writes that with the U.S. military intervention in Libya, many foreign-policy observers have bemoaned the supposed lack of a grand strategy within the Obama administration. Despite of what his critics say, Drezner notes that the Obama administration has not had just one

grand strategy, but two. The first, which he calls multilateral retrenchment, is designed to restore U.S. standing in the world by curtailing our overseas commitments and relying on global partners to assume part of the burden. The second strategy is “counterpunching” – actions aimed at reassuring allies that the U.S. will respond to rising threats and will not retreat into isolationism. Drezner believes that Obama needs to articulate his grand strategy more clearly, otherwise his critics and opponents will do it for him in less than flattering terms.

7. **THE NEW ASIANISM: JAPANESE FOREIGN POLICY UNDER THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF JAPAN**

Sneider, Daniel

Asia Policy, no. 12, July 2011, pp. 99-129

Sneider, Associate Director for Research at the Walter Shorenstein Asia-Pacific Research Center at Stanford University, writes that the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) came into power in 2009, ending fifty years of conservative rule, with the aim of rebalancing Japanese foreign policy with a greater focus on Asia. However, DPJ's first year was marked by tensions – first, over U.S. bases in Okinawa, and then clashes with China over the Senkaku Islands. While the U.S.-Japan security relationship has since been patched back up, Sneider notes that the “new Asianism” — an effort to manage the rise of China — remains at the core of DPJ's outlook. He warns that relations between Japan and the U.S. could deteriorate, and that the basis for dialogue built up during decades of rule by the Liberal Democratic Party needs to be revitalized to adapt to a new era. Sneider writes that the “new Asianism” of the DPJ should be viewed as an opportunity, since the party's focus on developing ties with countries as disparate as India, Australia and Vietnam could create a security structure that can cope with the rise of China.

8. **THE SOUTH CHINA SEA IS THE FUTURE OF CONFLICT**

Kaplan, Robert

Foreign Policy, no. 188, September/October 2011, pp. 76-85

The crucial difference between the 20th and 21st centuries, notes Kaplan, is that most of the contested areas in the world lay on dry land in Europe. In recent decades, more of the global economic and demographic center of gravity has shifted to Asia, where the spaces between major population centers are predominantly maritime. Kaplan predicts that the Western Pacific will become the world's new center of military contest, and will be primarily naval. Unlike land warfare, which enmeshes civilian populations, naval conflict is a more “clinical and technocratic affair ... returning military affairs to the narrow realm of defense experts.” He believes that the U.S. may, over time, have to adjust to the reality of a Chinese deep-water navy; although competition is a given, armed conflict is far from inevitable. If China and the U.S. successfully manage a balance, Asia and the world could become more secure and prosperous. Currently available online at

http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2011/08/15/the_south_china_sea_is_the_future_of_conflict

Democracy and Global Issues

9. **DESIGNING THE GREEN CLIMATE FUND: HOW TO SPEND \$100 BILLION SENSIBLY**

van Kerkhoff, Lorrae; Ahmad, Imran Habib; Pittock, Jamie; Steffen, Will

Environment, vol. 53, no. 3, May/June 2011, pp. 18-30

The authors, all with Australian National University, note that it is now widely acknowledged and provisioned under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) that industrialized countries must assume a large share of the global emission reduction target adapting to the existing and future consequences of climate change; this will be a greater challenge for developing countries. In recognition of this, in 2009 developed countries proposed a fund of up to \$100 billion per year to help developing countries mitigate and adapt to climate change. Here, Van Kerkhoff and his co-authors discuss how to spend this \$100 billion sensibly in ways that effectively support and enhance efforts to respond to climate change, particularly among the most vulnerable and poorly resourced countries across the globe. The authors examine precedents that offer both positive lessons and warning signs, or mistakes to avoid, such as adapting to freshwater shortages by building power-hungry desalination plants that are not supplied from renewable sources, and draw from these some key recommendations for the development of the Green Climate Fund.

10. HOW GOOGLE DOMINATES US

Gleick, James

New York Review of Books, August 18, 2011

Is Google evil? That question is essentially at the root of this review of four new books about the Internet phenomenon, whose motto is, famously, “Don’t be evil.” Steven Levy’s *IN THE PLEX* and Douglas Edwards’ *I’M FEELING LUCKY*, are accounts by former insiders, while *THE GOOGLIZATION OF EVERYTHING (AND WHY WE SHOULD WORRY)* by Siva Vaidhyanathan and *SEARCH & DESTROY: WHY YOU CAN’T TRUST GOOGLE* by Scott Cleland are outsider critiques that warn, among other things, about the Google’s marketing of users as products to advertisers, who employ search data to specifically target potential customers. The reviewer surveys Google’s development from the early days, its trajectory to Internet and ad dominance, examining its failures (Google Buzz) and the ethical razor’s edge it has walked on various issues, including monopolistic behavior, infringements of privacy and cooperation with oppressive governments such as China. Social media have changed the Web, and Google strives to meet the latest evolution with Google+. Gleick writes, “We need to decide what we want from Google -- if only we can make up our collective minds” which are the source of Google’s success. Even if we do, we might not get what we want -- but at least we’ll get better search results and tailor-made ads. Currently available online at <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/2011/aug/18/how-google-dominates-us/?pagination=false>

11. THE REBIRTH OF RUSSIAN CIVIL SOCIETY

Nikitin, Vadim

The Nation, July 18, 2011

Although state-controlled TV has kept the public largely in the dark about it, a new wave of civic activism is emerging in Russia. The country’s civil society, often considered a largely irrelevant, politicized and NGO-centric movement, is repositioning itself as a more participatory, nonideological and conspicuously patriotic one. As the state grows increasingly alienated from its people, civic leaders are carving out a small but growing space for online and grassroots protest. The new civil society activists are not interested in ideological grandstanding and deal-making of transactional politics, instead focusing their energies on combating official corruption and out-of-control development. Such pragmatic localism better reflects the worries of ordinary people, who place corruption, abuse of privilege and lack of accountability well above authoritarianism on the list of the country’s biggest problems. Civic activists still face big hurdles, the biggest one being the pervasive cynicism and despondency endemic in Russian society.

Currently available online at <http://www.thenation.com/article/162108/rebirth-russian-civil-society>

U.S. Society and Values

12. THE 'DRAMATIC PICTURE' OF RICHARD FEYNMAN

Dyson, Freeman

New York Review of Books, July 14, 2011

In the course of reviewing two books about Nobel Prize-winning physicist Richard Feynman, the author observes that the charismatic scientist may have achieved the rank of superstar, given that one of the biographies, FEYNMAN, by Jim Ottovani and Leland Myrick, is an engaging comic book. The other, QUANTUM MAN, explains the essence of Feynman's thinking and view of nature in "a new kind of scientific history." Dyson pays tribute to a colleague "whose contribution was the creation of a new way of thinking" that led others to their own discoveries.

13. HOW TO LAND YOUR KID IN THERAPY

Gottlieb, Lori

Atlantic Monthly, July/August 2011

Is it possible for parents to do too much for their children? Yes, says therapist and mother Lori Gottlieb. It is possible that parents, by trying to protect their children from unhappiness, deprive them of happiness as adults. Overprotected children grow into adults who think something must be terribly wrong when they experience the normal frustrations of life. Kids need exposure to discomfort, failure, and struggle to learn how to be resilient and persevere -- qualities that lead to life fulfillment and success. And despite the spate of articles in recent years exploring why so many people in their 20s seem reluctant to grow up, the problem may be less that kids are refusing to separate and individuate than that their parents are resisting doing so. With families having fewer children and society offering less of a close-knit community, it may be that parents cling too closely to their children for companionship. Currently available online at:

<http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2011/07/how-to-land-your-kid-in-therapy/8555/>

14. SAMUEL MORSE'S REVERSAL OF FORTUNE

McCullough, David

Smithsonian, vol. 42, no. 5, September 2011, pp. 80-88

Samuel F.B. Morse, the inventor of the telegraph, had set his hopes on being a painter since his college days. However, a series of setbacks and disappointments, the death of his wife, an ill-advised candidacy for the mayor of New York City under the anti-immigrant Nativist party, had by 1838 left him despondent, and he quit painting for good. The author notes, however, that if Morse had not stopped painting when he did, his home tinkering would not have resulted in the invention of the electromagnetic telegraph. After quitting his art, Morse focused on the crude device in his New York apartment. By opening and closing an electrical circuit, signals of dots and dashes could be translated into letters by a receiving apparatus. Key to his invention was a series of electromagnetic relays that would place no limit on the distance a message could be transmitted. After a series of successful tests, Morse "electrified" Washington with a demonstration of the telegraph in the Capitol, in the presence of President van Buren. Available online at <http://www.smithsonianmag.com/history-archaeology/Samuel-Morses-Reversal-of-Fortune.html?c=y&page=3>

15. **THE VISIONS OF ANN BEATTIE**

O'Rourke, Meghan

New York Review of Books, July 14, 2011

The development of fiction writer Ann Beattie's work from the 1970s to the present is assessed in this review of a new collection of her stories, *The New Yorker Stories*, and a range of other books by the author. Although her writing has been called "minimalist" and compared to that of Raymond Carver, her focus is on creating mood rather than building to sharp emotional resolutions. Her stylistic evolution has moved with the times of her generation. The "non-emotive coolness" of her writing notwithstanding, she evokes a wry, absurd view of the world and questions the pretenses we use to evade reality and mask our failures to communicate.